

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 IO-13 ISO-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-08 INR-10

LAB-04 NSAE-00 SIL-01 /049 W

-----089492 181023Z /11

R 171923Z FEB 78

FM AMEMBASSY MADRID

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3525

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY LISBON

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY OSLO

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

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USEEC AND USOECD ALSO FOR EMBASSIES

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ELAB, PINT, SP

SUBJECT: LABOR UPDATE/PLANT COMMITTEE ELECTIONS

REF: MADRID 1573

1. SUMMARY: PLANT COMMITTEE ELECTIONS CONTINUED TO GRIND ALONG, WITH HUNDREDS OF LOCAL CONTESTS ACROSS SPAIN AGAIN THIS WEEK. A TOTAL OF BETWEEN 800,000 AND ONE MILLION WORKERS HAVE VOTED, OUT OF SIX MILLION THEORETICALLY ELIGIBLE. BY OPTIMISTIC ESTIMATE, UP TO THREE MILLION MAY EVENTUALLY VOTE, WITH THE SHORTFALL COMING MAINLY IN THE SMALLEST COMPANIES. MOST OBSERVERS CONTINUE TO PUT THE COMMUNIST-DOMINATED WORKERS' COMMISSIONS (SWC) OVER
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THE SOCIALIST UGT TRADE UNION, BY ABOUT THE SAME MARGIN AS LAST WEEK. THE UGT APPEARS TO BE STRENGTHENING IN THE BASQUE COUNTRY, MAINLY AT THE EXPENSE OF THE MODERATE BASQUE STV UNION. END SUMMARY.

2. THE TWO LARGE UNIONS CONTINUED TO INCREASE THEIR TOTAL SHARE OF THE VOTE, ACCORDING TO LATEST "OFFICIAL" RESULTS

FROM MINISTRY OF LABOR AS OF FEB 11. SWC NOW REPORTEDLY HAS 36 PERCENT OF ELECTED WORKER DELEGATES, VERSUS 23 PERCENT FOR UGT; LAST WEEK SHOWED 33 AND 21 PERCENT RESPECTIVELY. FOUR SMALL UNIONS ARE RUNNING ABOUT 2 PERCENT EACH: THE INDEPENDENT SOCIALIST USO, FAR-LEFT SU AND CSUT, AND THE BASQUE STV (WHICH CONTESTS ONLY THE FOUR BASQUES PROVINCES). "UNAFFILIATED" DELEGATES ARE STILL NUMEROUS, BUT DECLINING AT 22 PERCENT VERSUS 25 PERCENT LAST WEEK. "INDEPENDENTS" HOLD THIRD PLACE WITH 10 PERCENT.

3. LOOKING AT RESULTS BY REGION, SWC CONTINUES TO RUN FAR AHEAD OF UGT IN MADRID AND THE WHOLE MEDITERRANEAN LITTORA SHOWING "OFFICIAL" LEADS OF TWO TO ONE IN BARCELONA, SEVILLA, AND MADRID, AND SIX TO ONE IN VALENCIA. FEW OBSERVERS BELIEVE THAT THESE MARGINS WILL STAND UP, AND UGT CONTINUES TO DENY THAT THEY EVEN EXIST MOMENTARILY. IN THE FOUR BASQUE PROVINCES, AMONG SPAIN'S MOST HEAVILY INDUSTRIALIZED, REPORTED FEB 16 THAT THE UGT HAD BEEN GAINING GROUND IN RECENT DAYS, AND HAD APPARENTLY PUSHED THE STV INTO THIRD POSITION. SWC CONTINUES TO HOLD FIRST PLACE BY A NARROW MARGIN.

4. EMBASSY MET FEB 16 WITH UGT INTERNATIONAL SECRETARY MANUEL SIMON, WHO STILL PROFESSED OPTIMISM AT UGT PROSPECT FOR AN OVERALL VICTORY. HE PROVIDED EMBASSY WITH THE UGT LATEST ELECTION RESULTS PRINTOUT, WHICH AS BEFORE BEARS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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NO RELATION TO ANY OFFICIAL OR UNOFFICIAL RESULTS REPORTED ELSEWHERE. WE NOTE THAT, FOR THE FIRST TIME, THIS IN-HOUSE UGT PUBLICATION SHOWED SWC LEADING IN SEVERAL PROVINCES, INCLUDING MADRID AND SEVILLA IN TERMS OF POPULAR VOTES, THOUGH UGT STILL CLAIMS TO LEAD BOTH IN DELEGATES ELECTED. HE ATTRIBUTED THE GOVT-REPORTED "OFFICIAL" RESULTS TO A DESIRE TO INFLATE THE "INDEPENDENTS" (NUCLEUS OF A POSSIBLE CENTER-ORIENTED TRADE UNION) AND SIMULTANEOUSLY TO WEAKEN THE UGT (AND THUS THE PSOE) BY STRENGTHENING SWC. SIMON NOTED THAT ALL THE MAJOR UNIONS CONTINUE TO FILE PLANT ELECTION PETITIONS, AND PREDICTED THAT ABOUT THREE MILLION WORKERS WOULD EVENTUALLY VOTE. WHEN PRESSED, HE APPEARED TO ACCEPT THE NOTION OF UGT FINISHING A CLOSE SECOND WITHOUT PARTICULAR STRAIN: HE ESTIMATED THAT, BARELY TWO YEARS AGO, ABOUT 75 PERCENT OF SPANISH WORKERS WHO SUPPORTED ANY OPPOSITION TRADE UNION SUPPORTED SWC. THUS, THE UGT'S GROWTH OVER THE INTERVENING PERIOD COULD ONLY BE CAUSE FOR SATISFACTION. AFTER THE ELECTIONS, HOWEVER, WOULD COME THE REAL TEST: TRAINING THE NEWLY-RECRUITED UGT CADRES AND EDUCATING THE ELECTED UGT PLANT COMMITTEE MEMBERS IN COLLECTIVE BARGAINING AND OTHER UNION SERVICES. THE WORKERS, HE NOTED, WOULD VOTE ONCE FOR A UNION LABEL

AND A REPUTATION, BUT AFTERWARDS WOULD EXPECT SOME REAL SERVICES FROM THEIR TRADE UNION, AND WOULD BE DISILLUSIONE IF THEY FAILED TO GET THEM.

5. SIMON WAS REALISTIC BUT NOT DEFEATIST ABOUT UGT'S ABILITY TO COMPETE IN THESE AREAS, NOTING UGT'S LIMITED FINANCIAL MEANS VERSUS SWC. THE DM 10 MILLION DGB LOAN WOULD, HOWEVER, BE A HELP WHEN IT FINALLY WAS DELIVERED. IN ANY CASE, SIMON CONTINUED, THE POST-ELECTION PERIOD

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COULD BE EXPECTED TO CONSOLIDATE UGT AND SWC AS THE ONLY SERIOUS TRADE UNIONS IN SPAIN (NOT COUNTING TE REGIONAL STV). UNIONS THAT COULD NOT CONTROL OR INFLUENCE PLANT COMMITTEES, HE PREDICTED, WOULD BE SHUT OUT OF ANY IMPORTANT ROLE IN COLLECTIVE BARGAINING. WHEN THE WORKERS REALIZED THIS, THEY WOULD ABANDON THE SMALLER UNIONS, JUST AS THE SPANISH VOTERS ABANDONED THE SPLINTER POLITICAL PARTIES RATHER THAN "THROW AWAY" THEIR VOTES IN THE JUNE 1977 PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS.

6. COMMENT: THE SWC CONTINUES TO LOOK LIKE THE PROBABLE

"VICTOR" IN THESE FIRST FREE SPANISH LABOR ELECTIONS,
THOUGH THE MARGIN WILL PROBABLY BE CLOSER TO THE 4 OR 5
PERCENT INDICATED BY THE NEWS SERVICES, THAN THE 12 OR 23
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PERCENT NOW INDICATED IN THE "OFFICIAL" RETURNS. THE SWC
HAS RUN A MODERATE CAMPAIGN, STRESSING ITS "EXPERIENCE"
IN TRADE UNIONISM AND HENCE ITS ABILITY TO "DELIVER" FOR
ITS MEMBERS. IT CONTINUES TO DENY THAT IT IS COMMUNIST-
DOMINATED, AND WHILE MOST OUTSIDERS ARE LESS THAN IMPRESSED,
MANY SPANISH WORKERS WHO SUPPORTED THE PSOE IN THE
PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS ARE EVIDENTLY WILLING TO GIVE SWC
THE BENEFIT OF THE DOUBT. FINALLY, SIMON'S EMPHASIS ON
THE IMPORTANCE OF LABOR EDUCATION IS SIGNIFICANT, AND THE
UT WILL BE WELL-ADVISED TO GIVE THIS MATTER THE HIGH
PRIORITY IT MERITS. STABLER

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